

An intertwining between Metaphysic, Poetry, and Initiation

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Citation:

Melli, Angelo. "An intertwining between Metaphysic, Poetry and Initiation." 2023. Academia, URL= <https://www.academia.edu/81855426> Accessed 19 February 2023.

1. Introduction

Frequently, most of the literature that is studied in schools or universities analyses classic texts by authors such as Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde or Daniel Defoe. The idea of this short paper is to look for a "point of contact", let's call it in this way, trying to understand where the inspiration that drives a poet to write a particular poem or literary text starts. While I was sitting at the desks at the University of Düsseldorf and studying the literary aspects of a poem, I often felt is something was missing.

Seeing deeper, I noticed how the poet's private life had a huge impact regarding the writing of a text and poetical verses. The events from poets' life are camouflaged into words. Thus, different concepts that not visible in written poems but are connected

with each other, are not deeply analysed by university chairs. Therefore, when there is talk of hidden metaphysical ideas or a double-meaning behind a verse, the idea is discarded or not taken seriously. This is partly because it does not suit the academics themselves and because one does not want to go outside the canons of study and the university agenda. It is then enough to take everything literally and memorize the academic syllabus without having to ask alternative questions.

I wonder then, would this not be precisely the purpose of literary research and of the poets themselves, to investigate these issues in depth, trying to change perspective and not dwell on appearances?

As will be seen later, especially in the case of Dante Alighieri and Henry Vaughan, I note how from a semiotic point of view their verses allow for an interpretation that go beyond the normal concepts that are studied in universities. For reasons of space, this short text does not aim to resolve this issue, nor is it intended to "find the key" related to the hidden meaning behind a poetic text. However, I would like to help set a foundation that may be of help future researchers in the hope that poetry, metaphysics and initiation may converge into a single field of study, thus broadening the studies of poetry itself and to help the poet discover himself. Finally, in the bibliography I have listed an additional set of books and authors that relate to this topic providing a starting point for research.

1.2 Preliminary considerations

In the academic field, apart from theological studies, not much importance is given to literary and poetic works that derive from metaphysical concepts. And it is usually assumed that this is a way of praising God, or it is only classified as 'metaphysical-religious' literature since the message of these works, being too abstract or religious or occult, is not taken really into account to the right extent. Hence, metaphysical literature then has only a secondary or almost non-existent role in school curricula.

In my opinion, metaphysical concepts behind a literary text are – indirectly and sometimes even directly - the fundamental part of the text. But the reader does not grasp the real meaning, or he stops only at the external, literal expression, without trying to change the reading perspective. One stops only at what is exposed without thinking about what might lie behind each written word. And no other interpretative key is offered.

This leads to the following questions: What does the metaphysical concept or theme mean in poetry? Who are the English metaphysical poets and what does their metaphysical poetry represent and how do they represent it? Which forms or symbols are used to express their thoughts directly or indirectly? And above all, what are the origins, symbols and concepts hidden behind metaphysical poetry?

All this, while also taking into account other poets from other movements and periods and cultures, relates to the topic.

Since in the field of literary research or in schools these topics are treated rarely or not considered important, it seems appropriate to delve into these hidden themes in the world of poetry Metaphysics.

1.3 Phases of Development in Metaphysics

But exactly what is meant by 'metaphysics' ?

Looking at today's definition of the development of metaphysics, we have the following description: "Metaphysics [is a] branch of philosophy whose topics in antiquity and the middle Ages were the first causes of things and the nature of being" (Britannica).

The term metaphysics derives especially from the ancient Philosophy that of Aristotle, "μετὰ τὰ φυσικά", hence the contracted form μεταφυσικά, used to indicate the "first science" or "of first things" (Cohen 2018) and literally it means "after physics". So it could be said to go beyond the apparent physical body of nature to include the concept of the soul.

From a historical perspective, three main phases of the development of Metaphysics can be recognized:

(a) In the ancient period, the study of first principles, being, reality, knowledge, first causes and their functions, including also reflections on the divine, dominated the intellectual life. This period thus included a theological point of view, based on Aristotle's treatises that would later influence the literature of that time.

b) In the Middle Ages, human existence and being was seen through the lens of religion. Christianity was the key to the interpretation in this regard.

Because of Thomas Aquinas' input, ancient metaphysics is here reevaluated. Thomas Aquinas drew on the concepts of Aristotle and Plato, namely the concept of the soul that manifests itself and takes shape in the human being. The connection of the divine and creative principle of the ancient Greeks with the biblical God established

the basis of the centrality of the human being and indicated the relationship between God and nature. Around this period there seems to be a 'fusion' of medieval literature with various metaphysical concepts. In the United Kingdom, for example, William Blake seems to represent this category. This theme will be explored in depth below.

c) Metaphysics in the modern period begins with idealism and goes all the way through positivism to the present day. Here theology is not part of metaphysics, the latter being considered instead as a discipline. Although the figure of God is not excluded from the discussions, it assumes a less significant role.

Considerable importance is given to the philosophical and physical disciplines, with important contributions from philosophers such as Descartes, Kant and Heidegger. In addition, modern metaphysics focuses on the unknown, focusing on the limits and characteristics of human knowledge. Logic and rationalism dominate in this period.

Phase c seems to represent the thought and lyricism of metaphysical poets. Metaphysical poetry dates back to the 17th century and takes place in Great Britain.

2. Metaphysical poetry in the American poets

The term metaphysics was first coined by John Dryden in 1693 when he described a poem by John Donne later popularised by Samuel Johnson in 1781. Metaphysical poetry', which identifies the literary production of this period, was created later and deals with the main problems of nature, the universe and human life. Some key elements of this poetic current are, for example, the predilection of these poets for wit, spirit or witticism, but also the use of the conceit, concept, or daring metaphor within which the logic of an argument is presented; like the presence of images from the sciences, astronomy and medicine; or the colloquial character with which the poet addresses the reader or the loved one is also a typical feature. In addition, metaphysical poetry intertwines in various ways the communication of love with new and old forms of Anglican, Catholic or Protestant liturgy.

In general, we can say that there are two points of approaches. On the one hand there are poets who apply a strictly Anglican-Catholic jargon and concepts referring to the holy scriptures, with the aim of expressing only the concept of the "human body" and man's relationship to death, while on the other hand there are those who analyze man more from a metaphysical point of view, i.e. the relationship "God and

man", from a more spiritual point of view. It will now be seen how these concepts, i.e. the search for God or a higher dimension takes place in English poetics.

John Donne was one of the most important metaphysical poets of his time. His poems revolved around his inner spirituality, psychological analysis and sexual realism. His poems include 'The Flea'. Other famous metaphysical poets include Henry Vaughn and George Herbert or Andrew Marvell. Marvell is best known for his work 'To His Coy Mistress', and several metaphysical poems.

In Donne's lyrics we recognize how he was a lover of luxury and the mundane. Donne frequented the most popular salons of the time and, in the lyrics, one recognizes how the concept of the man of the world, the dandy and the man tormented by religious and moral issues coexisted. John Donne appeared to belong to a minority that was frowned upon by the Elizabethan government and was soon forced to convert to the Anglican religion, becoming Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in 1621 and one of the most popular preachers of the time.

His background and his conversion played a decisive role in his life as well as in his lyrics. Thus, one recognizes here a strong influence from the Church of his time. One could say that in order not to go against the Church of that time Donne was 'forced' to stick to certain rules and words to express his poetry to avoid reprisals from the Anglican Church.

To the first period of his life belong a group of elegies and the collection of love lyrics Songs and Sonnets, composed at the very peak of the sonnet fashion of the late 16th century. The poet may address the reader in the tone of an abrupt command, or he may order him to suspend the affairs of daily life to listen to his speculations on love.

In the Holy Sonnets we also find the theme of death, dissolution of matter and resurrection linked to apocalyptic images of the end of the world or death itself, or of the sinful poet trembling at the prospect of final judgement and eternal damnation.

Resurrection linked to apocalyptic images of the end of the world or of death itself, or of the sinful poet trembling before the prospect of final judgement and eternal damnation. The Holy Sonnets mark the definitive abandonment of love poetry and the transition to religious poetry. He presents all the elements that characterized the poet's erotic communication with his beloved: the absolute and exclusive individual experience, the abrupt and vigorous tone with which he addresses God, an intensely emotional relationship between the desperate sinner and a beloved and severe God.

The common thread running through all his works is the relationship between body and soul, which manifests itself in the themes of death and resurrection and in the meditation on that elusive and inscrutable condition between life and death that marks both erotic and religious experience.

However, Donne's style does not match, and in many cases seems totally opposed to that of other metaphysical poets such as Dryden and Johnson. One could say that Donne uses metaphysical and symbolic language but sticks to a 'classical' view of Christianity in order to express emotions and inner dilemmas, without really entering into the concept of metaphysics.

A notable contribution also came from Donne's student. Herbert George, like Donne, also devoted himself to religious life before abandoning his political career. In 1633 his most important work appeared, *The Temple*, a large collection of poems of an explicitly metaphysical character, in which Herbert outlines the different moments of his religious experience and proposes a program of how man should live. His style, made up of concrete images and refined, often obscure details, is typical of his style, as is his versification technique. Herbert also devoted himself to music, i.e. to mystical contemplation and the composition of poetry.

Now one will see other poets, even metaphysical ones, but with a different approach.

S.T. Eliot was one of the most influential English critics of the first half of the century. Eliot is also known for having revived the tradition of metaphysical poetry in the last century. Continuing the typically British tradition of poet-critics shared by Ben Jonson, J. Dryden, S.T. Coleridge and M. Arnold, Eliot wrote numerous essays on ancient and modern authors, on the theory of poetry and on the foundations of literary criticism itself. In one of his most famous works, *The Waste Land*, divided into five parts and composed of more than 400 verses, Eliot sets out his vision of the modern world, a ghostly land where faithlessness and spiritual aridity have deprived life of all meaning, reflecting a crisis inherent in the human condition itself.

Somewhat like the materialistic crisis and the lifestyle crisis that negatively affect the mental and spiritual health of modern man in 2022.

The structure of the work is complex, as scenes and episodes follow each other without logical order, united only by the association of topics and symbols. The first two parts describe the inhabitants of the Wasteland: spiritually dead men, whose life is only an illusion (they are dead-in-life) and whose actions are mechanical and meaningless; even love is sterile, reduced to simple sexual instincts. This is also partly

reminiscent of the concept of Maya, or how, according to Hinduism, man does nothing but sleep, since he has no access to his true inner self, and how man is a slave to the senses.

In the third of Eliot's text, the element of fire appears; the fourth and fifth represent man's reintegration into the basic element, water. There are also comparisons between metaphysical and everyday life, intellectual and banal, ironic and serious, using elements derived from the Greek, Jewish and Celtic traditions. Great legendary figures appear, such as the Cumaean Sibyl, and it is not difficult to discern in the text an echo of Dante's *Inferno*. It seems that Eliot tries to go beyond 'classical' poetry and actively seeks, through his themes, to make the reader recognize the problems that chain man to life. Moreover, the concept of water seems to correspond to certain notions of alchemy, as does the concept of fire.

Eliot composed *Ash Wednesday* in London between 1927 and 1930, which is part of the second phase of his artistic production. In this work the conversion to Anglicanism is characterized by religious inspiration and concepts of hope, after the first pessimistic phase.

3. Consideration of Vaughan's lyrics in relation to symbolism.

Henry Vaughan's writing is a typical example for a metaphysics which aims at the realm of God and the union from the Lord and mankind. His works, often centred on a lonely communion with nature and childhood memories. Vaughan's major texts include: *Poems*, *Silex Scintillans*, *Olor Iscanus*, *The Mount of Olives*, *Flores Solitudinis* and *Thalia Rediviva*.

Especially his work *Silex Scintillans* is really relevant. The Latin title of Vaughan's main work *Silex Scintillans* means " Firestone" (silex: stone, rock; scintillans: sparks). It is a metaphor for the religious reawakening of the cold human heart: it can be touched by God's word as if by a ray of lightning and can thereby spark and kindle a warming fire.

Vaughan was oriented towards the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. Stylistically, he was also strongly influenced by George Herbert and his poetry collection *The Theple* of 1633, in whose succession he explicitly placed himself. Traditional Welsh poetry also influenced his writing style, for example, there is much more alliteration and assonance in his poems. A guiding theme of *Silex Scintillan* is

the relationship between this world and the other world, between the physical and the spiritual-emotional world. The basic situation described in the poems is a rather negative one: it is characterized by the absence of the church and the resulting doubt about the presence of God in this world. This corresponded to the real situation of the Anglicans: they could no longer practice their religion and were therefore "distant from God". However, it should be indicated how the message and view of the poet differs from the 1 to the 2 appearance.

In the first version there is a motif of 'defeat', in which man cannot change his destiny, while in the second published version of *Silex Scintillans* there is greater hope of freeing oneself from the evil of life and reaching the other side.

3.1 Excursus about the Influence of the Bhagavad Gita

Taking an Excursus, it seems that metaphysical poets through poetry try to penetrate the 'real', which separates our mortal world from eternity, i.e. use poetry as a tool to shorten the distance from God.

The concept of union with God through poetry is a factor that recurs in other cultures as well, especially in Hinduism. Just think of the *Bhagavadgītā* 'Song of the Divine' or 'Song of the Adorable' or, less commonly, also referred to the "Wonderful Song of the Divine". It is made up of about 700 verses (śloka, quatrains of octonaries) divided into 18 sonnets (adhyāya, "readings"), in the version known as the Vulgate, located in the sixth parvan of the great epic poem *Mahābhārata*.

The various episodes narrated in the text are set at the time when the virtuous warrior Arjuna - one of the Pāṇḍava brothers, son of the god Indra, prototype of the hero - is about to begin the battle of Kurukṣetra, which will last 18 days, during which he will have to fight and then kill his own family members, relatives, mentors and friends, who are, however, part of the evil Kaurava faction, usurpers of the throne of Hastināpura, who also metaphorically symbolise the moral and physical difficulties of every being and yogi.

For instance, in Chapter 3 the Gita teaches and emphasizes the need for action, in this way with a kind of Harmony between several factors expressed in Sanskrit poetic verses. In some verses God is compared to a higher form than Poetry itself:

"Amongst the hymns in the Samaveda know me to be the Brihatsama; amongst poetic meters I am the Gayatri. Of the twelve months of the Hindu calendar I am Margsheersha, and of seasons I am spring, which brings forth flowers".

This text has a value equal to a sacred text expressed in poetic verse. A transmitted doctrine that allows one to reach God and that is expressed in poetic verse of the highest level, with the aim of leading the human being to liberation: "The text [of the *Gita*] offers a survey of the different possible disciplines for attaining liberation through knowledge (*Jnana*), action (karma), and loving devotion to God (bhakti), focusing on the latter as both the easiest and the highest path to salvation" (Cornille).

As will be seen below, there are religious figures who have grouped spiritual concepts with a 'kind' of sacred teachings. Delving into this subject would require several separate studies. The following hints are intended to give a brief outline of the divine-human relationship.

From a theological point of view this is reminiscent of Thomas Aquinas and how he described how God's influence is in the processes of nature and what lies behind matter. In addition, Aquinas also took into consideration and intertwined scientific notions with these processes (this is reminded somewhat of what Paramahansa Yogananda explained scientifically and spiritually in his texts, or how Sri Yukteswar describes sacred science in his text, or how Gustavo Adolfo Rol with his concept of the "Gutter" and the "Tremendous Law" of Green).

3.2 Vaughan's style and approach with the soul

Returning to Vaughan's style, it reflects a very particular approach to nature. Vaughan does not use Christian symbols, and he expresses nature as a collection of creatures that have not lost that 'true' contact with spirituality, because they are primitive creatures and have not been 'diverted and corrupted by the world'. All this is reminiscent of the purpose of the *Gita*, which is to seek God, in this case through poetic verses.

Through this message, the poet refers to the concept of innocence, alluding to childhood. Henry regrets that angelic period, he would like to regain the innocence of his childhood and does so with the poetry *The Retreat*. His attitude to life is that of a child who spontaneously appreciates everything around him: 'wonder'. This is very reminiscent of Jesus' words that to enter the kingdom of God, one must be like a child: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:1-5, 10, 12-14).

Vaughan considered nature neither for its own sake nor as a mirror of his own interiority, but as the realization of a divine idea. He tried to read nature as if it were the Bible. In this way, he wanted to come closer to deciphering a divine plan of creation and thus to a fundamental knowledge of the world, even if a final understanding depended on an inspiration by the Holy Spirit and could not be understood by the human mind alone.

Vaughan's way of expressing and seeking God through nature and spirit, going beyond the common canons of interpretation, points out that to achieve this, it is necessary to "reconnect" with God not only through logic alone, which can actually become an obstacle! This brings to mind a phrase of the famous ancient metaphysical philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus: "However far the intellect goes, it can never reach the boundaries of the soul".

These concepts are best expressed through Emerson's essay "The Over-Soul" where in his commentary he praises the ancient poets and authors such as Milton, praising what their poetry grants to man: "The soul is superior to its knowledge; wiser than any of its works. The great poet makes us feel our own wealth, and then we think less of his compositions". All this underlies when poetry reaches the soul of the human being.

One could link the figure of Vaughan to that of the poet-gnostic. Using the words of Umberto Eco, the gnostic identifies, like other metaphysical poets, with the "evil of living" and feels enclosed in a "cosmic conspiracy" and follows the aim of reuniting with God, or using other terms, with the origin. The poet-gnostic despite being surrounded by a sick world and feels invested, in this case thanks to poetry, with a "superhuman" power. On the other hand, the divinity, which in my opinion we can also call the soul or atma in mankind, cooperates in harmony to achieve higher ways of being.

Using again Eco's words, man then becomes an 'übermensch'. And in my opinion, when poetry implies union with the divine through an inner balance - in harmony with the poet or reader - it becomes a more than valid tool for reuniting with God, since it activates prerogatives and possibilities inherent in man that allow him to see nature in a different way, thus entering a real and true metaphysical world.

Taking a brief Excursus, one could also think of poetry as a form of Yoga. The word 'yoga' means 'union', and in Hindu doctrine - which, as we shall see later, also seems

to be present in European poetry - there are various forms of yoga, i.e. union, with the divine (Karma Yoga, 'physical' yoga as seen in the West, or Bhakti Yoga), so poetry in itself, based on a kind of inner harmony of the poet or reader, is a valid form of yoga with the divine.

4. A brief comparison of the different metaphysical poets and “Initiation group”

If we compare Donne and Vaughan, we see that Donne limits himself to praising the figure of God, relying on a theological theme, which does not go as deep as Vaughan. Instead, Vaughan seems to be trying to bring man to a higher level through poetry, while Donne limits himself to pointing out the worldly aspects of life that chain man to the sufferings of life. In the works of Henry Vaughan, the concept of 'God and man' breaks out of the common canons by using ambiguous language with multiple meanings, which differs from Donne's.

There is yet another important point to bear in mind about Vaughan's profile. His twin brother Thomas Vaughan was an alchemist, philosopher, esotericist and kabbalist, a member of the Rosicrucian group, who wrote several well-known works on magic and occultism under the pseudonym of Eugenius Philalethes, and was also responsible for the English translation of the Rosicrucian documents "Fama Fraternitatis and Confessio Fraternitatis". Vaughan exercised an important activity in the field of spirituality and occultism, which also influenced the metaphysical poetry of his brother Henry. He was himself the author of verse in Latin and Welsh.

Finally, it is noticeable how in Vaughan's lyrics it is possible to interpret or read a text on several levels. To put it another way, it is like hiding the "true" with the "true". Vaughan represents the difficult situation of the Anglican Church of the time and uses a jargon that resembles and is partly like the metaphysical poets, but at the same time contains a hope, a symbol or, if we want to call it, a "message" of an initiatory nature. In general it seems that the main idea, or purpose, is the connection with an inner 'I', representing God, or at least certainly a higher inner state. The theme of another ego also recurs in other works, for example in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde written by Robert Louis Stevenson. two characters who apparently appear to be two completely separate people, but who are in close contact with each other.

5. Gustavo Adolfo Rol's relationship with poetry and concepts

One of the great intellectuals of the last century, Gustavo Adolfo Rol, also recognized the problem of reason, or more precisely of man's instincts linked to reason.

Certainly, due to moral conflicts throughout human history, they prevent man from making a natural connection, as it should be, with primal instincts that correspond to the world of metaphysics that is searched in poetic texts. Rol points out in particular that the lack of this connection is an "important factor in human unhappiness".

Moreover, according to Rol, art, like poetry, and feeling are nothing more than man's attempts to reach this "beyond". We speak of an inner, superior I in man who fights to free himself from instincts. And this inner self, also called the higher instinct, has the potential to transcend the instincts that bind man to the ordinary instincts through the conception of "Man's sublime consciousness", in other words the real goal that has to be achieved: ... [this superior instinct] is based on elements which, although they derive from a concrete transcendence towards the life of the [Freud's] subconscious, they still surpass it in their natural need to reach a superior state. I have defined this state as: "The sublime consciousness of man" (Rol).¹

In my opinion, poetry in itself, and especially metaphysical poetry, is an instrument that helps the human being to find his own reason for existing, since it helps to overcome that part of reason that blocks the human being from his inner self. As will be seen later, the poet, as expressed in the texts of Vaughan and Blake, becomes a spiritual seeker who sends his call to the infinite or, in other words, to God. In the metaphysical poetry of other authors, such as in the "Fedeli d' Amore" or in the Gita, the poet is as if he were crossing and seeing a bridge, a direct connection with the eternal.

¹ Rol, G.A., "La Coscienza Sublime. L'incontro con la poetessa Elda Trolli Ferraris".

5.1 The Italian poet Dante Alighieri and the connection with the group the Fedeli d' Amore

Now before exposing William Blake's metaphysical concepts, it is necessary to better understand how a certain branch of Metaphysical lyricism developed in Northern Europe, thus also in the United Kingdom, describing also other interpretative possibilities and keys to interpretation.

One theory derives from a sect or group of poets called the so-called Fedeli d'Amore, who seem to have, at least in part, similarities with the Rosicrucians. The roots of the "Fedeli d'Amore" seem to lie primarily in the Divine Comedy from Dante Alighieri a work that later influenced poets such as S.T. Eliot. Although not directly, it seems that Eliot pushed part of his lyricism by leaning on and trying to reflect an ancient mystical-metaphysical tradition derived from the Faithful of Love.

The Rosicrucians, from the German "Rosenkreuzer" or Rosi-crucian, are a legendary secret Kabalistic-Christian mystical order that began to be talked about in Germany at the beginning of the 17th century in connection with the fictional adventures of a certain Christian Rosenkreuz, who lived in the 15th century and was said to have been initiated into all the mysteries in the East and to have planned a reform of the world; Rosenkreuz's work would be continued by his disciples, who prided themselves on possessing all the secrets of nature. Some key symbols are the rose and the cross. Obviously this is not the only society of this kind, but all of this makes one wonder how metaphysical concepts exist on different levels and how they intertwine with literature, or rather poetry.

The question then arises as to how to analyse and discover other traces of this ancient knowledge expressed in poetry that Eliot, the metaphysical poets such as Vaughan and also other poets such as William Blake express in their lyrics?

Using the famous Italian text, the Divine Comedy, as an example, according to the director and well-known American expert on the Comedy - especially Dante's Inferno - Christopher Vogler, together with directors Luis Nero and Franco Zeffirelli and other authors, comments on the hidden truths in the Divine Comedy, opening up 4 interpretative perspective ways.

There are four different types of meaning that seem to overlap one another:

- a) Literal, which concerns the written meaning, which can be understood based on the concrete meaning of the words;
- b) Philosophical-theological, which is the interpretation of words from a religious point of view, linked to ancient philosophy.

- c) Political-social, which refers to the era experienced by Dante (the clash with the Church, the persecution of the Pope and the war between Guelphs and Ghibellines).
- d) A hidden initiatory meaning, of metaphysical and esoteric essence, addressed to the group (or persons) named "I Fedeli d'Amore".

5.2 Anagogic inspiration and initiation symbolism

According to authors such as Volger and other literary critics such as Luigi Valli, it seems that Dante's *Commedia* has strong connections with Arabic culture (Ibn-Arabi) and other ancient oriental "initiatory" traditions. There are also those who affirm, like the writer Edith Stein, that in Dante there is a strong sense of anagogic inspiration, in other words a theological symbolism that can be traced back to other works and traditions. Dante himself had texts from other religions and ancient cultures with metaphysical implications. And this could correspond, though not entirely, with the alchemical jargon and symbolism in the works of Vaughan and his twin brother.

Ancient poets, too, used poetry to express concepts and notions through symbolism. In fact, it seems that oral knowledge transmitted in writing through poetry already existed in the past, as early as the time of the Greek poet Homer. Allegories and symbolism of certain poetic elements play a very relevant role that allows the poet to convey his message. For example, Andrew Marvell in his poem "On a Dew Drop," uses the phrase "so the soul, that drop" to compare a dewdrop to the human soul.

Dante provides other traces of this ancient symbolism in other of his works as well. To do so, he often uses a female-female figure, which is also present in Vaughan and other authors.

Dante in his life loved a woman called Beatrice, but beyond that, in his texts and *Commedia* Dante expresses himself with a language that can be interpreted on several levels: "The encounter with Beatrice is also, however, a release, allowing the protagonist to move from the realities of his sins to the reality – fulfilled in Paradise – of his own virtues and potentialities" (Kirkpatrick).

The figure of Beatrice represents a higher knowledge that leads Dante to other levels of knowledge and describes a metaphysical connection (therefore beyond matter) with God using as a symbol with the figure of Beatrice and other allegories: "And, in conceiving that change, the notion of allegory is a relevant one" (Kirkpatrick). Also Edith Stein underlines how in Dante's Poetry there is actually a high metaphysical component, covered by a use of symbols like the Rose that seems to represent a state or level to be conquered.

In other words the concept of love for a woman and love for God are often united and expressed with an ambiguous language, mixing elements of physical pleasure (SHRESTHA) and spiritual love. The message that the poet wants to give only to the "right" reader is deliberately hidden or mixed with real events - thus creating multiple levels of interpretation.

Using an example from the Pragmatics of Herbert Paul Grice, one could say that metaphysical poets do not adhere to conversational maxims, that is, how to convey the message in the clearest way possible. However, Grice himself says that one must keep in mind the cultural aspect and the external factors that force one to speak in a certain way. I can well imagine that exposing some initiatic concepts at that time would have caused persecution by the Church.

The Rose in medieval literature has an occult meaning and is the symbol of love, of the Beloved - the soul - and of the Lover - the Supreme Being - desirous of mystical union. It is the small human soul, an infinitesimal part of the Great Soul, which seeks the way back to the "room" or House of the Father, where the mystical union will take place. The Love for the Rose that pushes the lover to the mystical union represents and achieves the cancellation of every duality and human and earthly opposition, in other words the state of a higher divine kingdom present in the human being (Seward). The root of this "Rose" seems to come, according to Vogler and the other directors, from the Sufist Arabic translation, which through Dante and other authors then flowed into Anglo-Saxon literature.

As far as the symbolism of the Cross is concerned, according to the "Fedeli D'amore" the Cross represents the teachings of Jesus who was for them nothing more than a great teacher who taught an ancient doctrine to help man find the liberation of the soul and the achievement of God. Even the great literary critic Emerson points out in his Essay "DIVINITY SCHOOL ADDRESS" how the figure of Jesus helped to find or at least to help men overcome the difficulties of life through the salvation of the soul "Jesus Christ belonged to the true race of prophets. He saw with open eye the mystery of the soul (Emerson)". However to explore the theory of occult teachings of Jesus would require an in-depth study elsewhere (such as Yogananda's interpretations). However, this leads one to think that a mystical-metaphysical relationship expressed through the Christ figure does exist.

One wonders, then, why express these concepts in such an ambiguous way?

The same idea of expressing concepts in parables and symbols has always been used in the past. Jesus himself through the gospels offers an answer to this question,(S. Paul: "...a veil is drawn over their hearts; but when there is conversion to the Lord, that veil will be removed" 2 Cor 3:15-16)

Looking at Jesus' own words, it seems that the cause was the people of his time who forced him to express himself in parables, since they were not able to understand such concepts when spoken openly. One might even think that this was a way to preserve these concepts from people who might use them to do harm.

6. Metaphysical-alchemical approach in the lyricism of William Blake

Lastly, another notable metaphysical poet is William Blake. Blake already between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries contributes to a poetic revolution. He is a revolutionary poet, in contrast to any dogma, institution and system, he breaks with the cultural patterns of his time anticipating themes and feelings of the romantic age.

From early childhood, he seemed to be plagued by strange apparitions. At the age of four, he had his first vision: God himself appearing to him at the window. When he turned eight, the hallucinations became recurrent; he told his mother that he had seen the prophet Ezekiel under a tree and claimed to have seen angels in the trees (Gilchrist).

During Blake's life few people could understand the mysticism behind his poetry. However, in the twentieth century was emerging a key to reading that saw in Blake's poetry not only an author of great importance but also a lyric belonging to a "world apart". This tendency began to spread and to find supporters also among other personalities of the academic culture.

They reread his poems and observed the language used with a more acute interest in those symbolic and allegorical aspects that could reveal the influence, in it, of Western esoteric currents.

He is one of the first to recognize the role of imagination in the metaphysical process, that is, the possibility of drawing on a reality beyond the world of phenomena and perceptions of the senses that Blake expresses in his verses. The verses dedicated to the chilling fierce beauty of the tiger, reveal that we are faced with a source of primordial energy, the "Chaos sine forma", in which all that is described are the elemental forces of Nature:

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.

Burnt the fire of thine eyes?

On what wings dare he aspire?

What the hand, dare seize the fire?

Using symbolism, the Tiger that burns "bright in the forests of the night" is precisely this essential and primordial faculty, the imagination lost as a result of the Fall, but also concealed by Enlightenment rationalism. "The forests of the night", symbolize the deep, (reminiscent of Dante's Dark Forest), but also the opposition to the illusions coming from the positivist thought of his time.

In the words of the critic Elémire Zolla, in his essay on *The Alchemical Androgyne*: "William Blake gave voice to a widespread tradition that was particularly alive among alchemists, imagining that visible matter is preceded by an invisible fermentation, in the course of which the male principle of light and time rotates like a "flaming sword" within the veil of snow and ice of the female principle, which represents the essence of space. The icy veil or the solid crust of the feminine aspect of primordial matter constitutes the visible aspect of reality, the cosmic illusion or maya". Moreover, Blake was immediately influenced by the thought of Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) and especially by that of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772).

But what is this marvellous wonder that the Metaphysical poets and other mystics describe and incessantly search for? In the scientific and positivist thinking that dominates our society, the poet tries to find an escape route to reconnect with the infinite and with God. In the words of Gustavo Adolfo Rol, the infinite and God are the exact same thing, only some call this "marvellous" in human life, God. Religion, and therefore also Metaphysics, assumes a function of union and connection with this source of immensity or primordial divinity: "If then a religion teaches us that the marvelous is identified with God, it will be easier, then to understand God"² (Rol).

Rol has certainly been a key and incredible figure in contemporary history. From many points of view. He has literally discovered and achieved great metaphysical achievements that are real and not just literal. Even his poetry includes a mystical-poetic interpretation that will be the subject of another study.

² Text translated by the writer from Italian into English. Original source: (Rol, G.A., "La Coscienza Sublime. L'incontro con la poetessa Elda Trolli Ferraris", a cura di G. Ferraris di Celle e M.L. Giordano, 2006, p. 34)

7. Conclusion

During this work it was shown how metaphysical poetry has several hidden points that can be interpreted at different levels. Metaphysical poetry is characterized by the search for a perfect balance not only between passion and intellect, but also by the search of the soul and therefore of God. The feelings are described with ingenious and strange images, allegories, drawn from philosophy, religion, science and everyday life, and colloquial language.

So we saw how metaphysical poetry can be not only a composition of words but also a way, an art to convey doctrines and messages that can offer the reader a new interpretive perspective.

Today's studies of poetry must open much more to new methods of reading taking into account the Connection-God-Poet, as in the case of Blake. This does not exclude theological studies and doctrines coming from other religions or movements that seem to have the same objective and that flow into the poetry. Above all here it is necessary to take into account the different reading options and interpretations that overlap, in other words, as seen before, the desire to hide the "true with the true".

Metaphysical poetry is therefore divided into different branches, where on one hand the poet acquires a role almost as a mediator between God and men, while other branches of metaphysical poetry are limited only to follow the religious language coming from the Church without digging deeper remaining only in the sphere of reason. For a possible future study it would be useful to analyse in the metaphysical lyric more under the concept of "Courtly Love" and "Neoplatonism". Poetry is like a bridge that allows us to know God more than normal professors and literary critics dare to think. It is necessary to analyse this theme with different eyes. I believe that after seeing these connections and authors, the university and school sector cannot afford to look away and deny these aspects of poetry. One thing that I believe is certain is that introducing metaphysics, (or even Sai Baba's lessons), into our school systems would greatly help future generations to follow a path of harmony. This would also help the world not to go into wars and battles as is happening now in 2022 in Ukraine.

This text was published online on the Academia platform on 10 May 2022, edited and revised on 25 February 2023. Thanks, if it could be cited for possible studies.

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